

Emperors were far from effective in stifling commerce, but they gave it the character of a speculation and enhanced its profits when it was successful. The imports of the United Kingdom increased from £28,561,270 in 1805 to £39,301,612 in 1810 and the exports increased in the same period from £31,064,492 to £43,568,757. England lost trade in the United States by her retaliatory decrees against Napoleon, which drove American products to France, but British goods penetrated through Napoleon's paper blockade at Embden and Hamburg, and the corrupt French officials grew rich as the price of certifying that these goods were the product of Prussian factories.¹ The country banks of England increased under the stimulus of speculation from 270 in 1797 to 600 in 1808, and 721 in 1810. The Bank of England, in the meantime, increased its discounts from £9,100,000 in 1804 to £16,400,000 in 1809, and £21,400,000 in 1810. The circulation of the Bank of England rose from £16,400,000 in 1801 to £24,200,000 in 1810, but the increase was trifling up to 1809 and was the consequence rather than the cause of the great increase in prices due to speculation.

If over-issues of bank-notes were responsible in some degree for the speculative mania in England, rather than merely its convenient tools, it was because the divorce of the paper currency from specie made bank-note issues easy and their issuers irresponsible. The proof that the speculative mania was not due entirely to the issues of paper money in Great Britain may be found in the fact that a like condition existed in France, which was upon a specie basis. The liquidation which followed the crisis of 1805 caused coin to pile up in the Bank of France to such an extent that the bank was obliged to invest a part in the obligations of the receivers general and to reduce interest to two and three per cent.² Commerce began to expand again in 1808, and the discounts of the Bank of France reached in that year 142,000,000 francs and in 1810 187,000,000 francs. Numerous failures occurred in 1810, but the leading merchants of Paris

¹Cunningham, II., 521, note.

²Juglar, 406.